

Meningitis

This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Meningitis is a disease caused by inflammation of the protective membranes covering the brain and spinal cord, known as the meninges. The inflammation is usually caused by an infection of the fluid surrounding the brain and spinal cord.

Meningitis may develop in response to a number of causes - usually bacteria or viruses - but it can also be caused by physical injury, cancer, certain drugs, or rarely, fungus or parasites. The severity of illness and the treatment for meningitis differ depending on the cause, so it's important to know the specific cause of the infection.

There are five types of meningitis:

Bacterial meningitis can be a life-threatening infection that needs immediate medical attention. There are vaccines to prevent some kinds of bacterial meningitis.

Viral meningitis is serious, but rarely fatal in people with normal immune systems.

Fungal meningitis is usually acquired by inhaling fungal spores from the environment. People with certain medical conditions, like diabetes, cancer, or HIV are at higher risk of fungal meningitis.

Parasitic meningitis is less common in developed countries. Parasites can contaminate food, water, and soil.

And finally, **non-infectious meningitis**. It's not spread from person-to-person, but can be caused by cancers, systemic lupus, certain drugs, head injury, and brain surgery.

For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov/meningitis.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.